

Message Text

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ACTION SCA-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SY-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 SCSE-00 PPTE-00

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R 121406Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2980

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

UNCLAS MOSCOW 0478

FOR SCA ACTION AND EUR INFO

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, UR, US

SUBJECT: REPORTS ON LOCAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING OVERSEAS

TRAVEL OF AMCITS

REF: STATE 2840

1. SUMMARY: AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE SELDOM SUBJECTS OF VIOLENCE IN SOVIET UNION, BUT FREQUENTLY RUN INTO LEGAL PROBLEMS GENERALLY INVOLVING CUSTOMS, WHICH MAY LEAD TO CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY, DETENTION AND/OR EXPULSION. ILLNESS IS COMMON BECAUSE OF UN-HEALTHFUL ENVIRONMENT AND RIGOROUS TOURIST CONDITIONS AND, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF LARGE NUMBER OF ELDERLY TOURISTS, DEATHS ARE HIGH IN PROPORTION TO TOTAL NUMBER OF TOURISTS.
END SUMMARY.

2. VIOLENCE INVOLVING AMERICAN CITIZENS IS QUITE RARE IN THE SOVIET UNION. CUSTOMS PROBLEMS ARE FAIRLY COMMON AND USUALLY INVOLVE ATTEMPTS BY U.S. TOURISTS TO BRING IN LITERATURE WHICH SOVIET AUTHORITIES CONSIDER "ANTI-SOVIET." TERM "ANTI-SOVIET" IS UNDEFINED AND CONFISCATIONS BASED ON IT ARE ARBITRARY AND CAPRICIOUS. COMMONEST ITEMS CONFISCATED ARE BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS ON JEWS,
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JUDAISM AND ISRAEL; BOOKS IN HEBREW; TEXTS IN RUSSIAN PUBLISHED BY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT; JEWELRY CONTAINING JEWISH RELIGIOUS, OR ISRAELI SYMBOLS. U.S. CITIZENS WITH FAMILY NAMES WHICH SEEM TO BE OF JEWISH ORIGIN OFTEN EXPERIENCE PARTICULARLY THOROUGH SEARCHES, INCLUDING IN SOME CASES BODY SEARCHES.

3. IF MATERIALS ARE DISCOVERED WHICH CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES CONSIDER

ANTI-SOVIET, U.S. CITIZENS ARE USUALLY DETAINED AT AIRPORT FOR PERIODS RANGING FROM SIX TO TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. INVESTIGATING AUTHORITIES NORMALLY TRY, OFTEN BY VEILED THREATS, TO FORCE TOURISTS WITH SUCH ITEMS TO SIGN RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE "AKT," WHICH IN EFFECT ACKNOWLEDGES THEIR GUILT. IN SOME CASES, TOURISTS HAVE BEEN REFUSED ADMITTANCE TO SOVIET UNION AND PUT ON PLANE FOR A WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY. CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT BEEN PERMITTING TEMPORARILY DETAINED AMERICANS TO CONTACT U.S. CONSULAR OFFICIALS, DESPITE THEIR OBLIGATION TO DO SO UNDER US-USSR CONSULAR CONVENTION AND FREQUENT EMBASSY PROTESTS ON SUBJECT.

4. SOME U.S. TOURISTS HAVE ALSO HAD PROBLEMS ATTEMPTING TO EXPORT ITEMS WHICH CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES HAVE DEFINED AS "NATIONAL TREASURES." OLD SAMOVARS, ANTIQUE ITEMS AND OLDER PAINTINGS HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN CONFISCATED, EVEN THOUGH U.S. CITIZENS HAD SALES RECEIPTS FOR ITEMS. THE SOVIET CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES ALSO RIGIDLY ENFORCE THE REQUIREMENT THAT ALL HARD CURRENCY BROUGHT INTO THE COUNTRY BE LISTED UPON ARRIVAL. MONEY NOT SO LISTED IS SUBJECT TO CONFISCATION UPON DEPARTURE.

5. ILLNESS IS FAIRLY COMMON, DUE BOTH TO NORMAL PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN TRAVEL AND TO FACT THAT TOURIST FACILITIES IN SOVIET UNION ARE NOT AS DEVELOPED AS IN U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPE. GIARDIASIS OCCUR FREQUENTLY TO U.S. TOURISTS WHO DRINK UNSTERILIZED WATER IN LENINGRAD AND OTHER SOVIET TOWNS AND CITIES. DUE TO HIGH NUMBER OF ELDERLY AMONG U.S. TOURISTS, ILLNESSES WHICH ARE NOT TREATED PROMPTLY OR EFFECTIVELY HAVE RESULTED IN DEATHS IN HIGH PROPORTION OF CASES RELATIVE TO TOTAL NUMBER OF TOURISTS.

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6. EMBASSY RECEIVES FAIRLY FREQUENT COMPLAINTS FROM U.S. TOURISTS STRANDED TEMPORARILY IN PROVINCIAL CAPITALS BECAUSE INTERNAL FLIGHT ON WHICH THEY WERE SCHEDULED TO TRAVEL EITHER OVERBOOKED OR DELAYED BECAUSE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS.

7. BECAUSE OF THE SOVIET LOCALE, THOSE TYPES OF PROBLEMS OFTEN PRODUCE FAR MORE SERIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL EFFECTS THAN IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 12-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770159/aaaabzpx.tel
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